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ABSTRACT

A kindergarten teacher implemented a 10-week practicum study designed to enhance the English acquisition of 38 limited English proficient kindergarten children. Primary goals of the study were to: (1) narrow the learning gap between the English speaking children and the limited English proficient children; and (2) develop language skills the children would need in first grade. To attain these goals, pretests and posttests were designed and administered to assess students' English comprehension. Test items were related to prescribed kindergarten objectives. In addition, whole language experiences were developed; literature was selected; sixth-grade peer teachers were recruited; and communication with students' families was established. Practicum evaluation data indicated that outcomes were positive. Students improved in their English comprehension. Many staff members expressed interest in whole language strategies and came to observe classroom activities. Pretests and posttests, and a resource list of 42 books for shared reading and other resources, are appended. Nearly 30 references are cited. (Author/RH)

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Improving Basic Language Skills of Limited English Proficient Kindergarten Children

by

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Improving Basic Language Skills of Limited English Proficient Kindergarten Children

by

Joy W. Trute

Cluster XXX

A Practicum I Report presented to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY
1990

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

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Approved:

Jan. 28, 1990
Date of Final Approval of Report

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ABSTRACT

Improving Basic Language Skills of Limited English Proficient Kindergarten Children. Trute, Joy W., 1989: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Whole Language/Second Language Acquisition/ Elementary Education/Kindergarten/Cultural Awareness/ Visual Perception/Auditory Discrimination.

The practicum was designed to enhance English acquisition for limited English proficient kindergarten children. One goal was to narrow the learning gap that existed between the English speaking children and the limited English proficient children. A second goal was to develop language skills necessary for immersion into first grade. Both goals were facilitated using a literature-based whole language approach.

The writer designed and administered pretests and posttests to determine students' English comprehension. Test items were correlated to prescribed kindergarten objectives. The writer developed whole language experiences, selected specific literature, recruited sixth-grade peer teachers, and established communication with student family members.

The results of the practicum were positive. Collected data analysis revealed significant student growth in English comprehension. Many staff members expressed interest in whole language strategies and came to observe classroom activities.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

A thirty-four year-old public elementary school in a dramatically changed community was the setting for the practicum. In a somewhat short period, the neighborhood shifted from a stereotypical white middle-class area to a racially mixed and very transient area. Immigrant families and political refugees flooded into the community, bringing with them their children. Single family dwellings of years past were replaced by two and three families, often including extended family members.

Though the school was built to fit five hundred-fifty children, enrollment at the time of practicum implementation reflected a student population of twelve-hundred fifty-three. The subsequent overcrowded conditions produced stressful circumstances under which students, staff, and administrators were attempting to function.

Literally every inch of school building space was used in one capacity or another. The school clinic was converted into a classroom and the stage was functioning as a work/ planning area for several teachers. Guidance, speech, and

special testing teachers were operating in a converted book storage area; the library housed the school computers and, therefore, was functioning as the school's computer center. Further, the library was partitioned to accommodate a learning disability class. Seven portable classrooms were installed and two more were to be installed to meet expanded enrollment.

The school was an example of many operating under similar conditions. The entire district was experiencing an overwhelming influx of political refugees. The school population reflected a bird's eye view of the community as a whole. More often than not, classrooms were comprised of children from different countries with different cultures and traditions. With cultural differences came experiential differences.

Enrollment statistics showed a population that was twenty-four percent White, twenty-five percent Hispanic and forty-nine percent Black. Approximately thirty percent of the Black population was Haitian and used limited English. According to mandate, school employees were racially balanced and reflected a ratio of one-third White, one-third Black and one-third Hispanic. Administration included a White male principal and a Hispanic female assistant principal.

According to school records, ESL or ESOL (English as a Second Language) class enrollment quadrupled over the past five years. Enrollment at the time of practicum implementation indicated that close to one-third of the

student population required ESL instruction. Forty-nine percent of the limited English proficient students learned Spanish as their first (home) language; forty-nine percent learned Haitian-Creole as their first language; while one percent learned languages other than Spanish or Haitian-Creole as their first language.

After much deliberation, the school administrators opted to form special classes to provide full-time immersion English to meet the needs of the growing limited English proficient (LEP) population. The result was the formation of five self-contained English as second language (ESL) classes, operating with the pull-out ESL program. Pull-out classes require students to leave their regular classrooms daily for time to receive intensive English instruction.

It was decided that the school's pull-out program would instruct kindergarten through third grade limited English students who had scored within the intermediate level of English proficiency, as determined by state-adopted assessment instruments. Further, the pull-out program would instruct all levels of limited English students in the remaining grades four through six.

Of the five self-contained classrooms, one would function as a combined second and third grade class, two as first grade classes and two as kindergarten (combined) classes. All the self-contained LEP children were to receive bilingual instruction in content areas, one period daily.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is one of the two kindergarten teachers who had been placed in a combined self-contained ESL class of thirty-eight children. Whereas nine of the children learned Spanish as their first (home) language, the other twenty-nine children learned Haitian-Creole as their first language. One child was bilingual, functioning as well in Spanish and Haitian-Creole. Placement of the children in the ESL classroom was determined by initial screening scores that showed the lowest level of English proficiency. Twelve of the students had arrived in the United States within the last six months.

Both teachers were specially trained to teach LEP children. The writer was expected to provide sufficient language experience in English while developing those basic skills necessary for the entry into first grade.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

That certain areas of the United States experience a constant flow of immigrants within their borders is a circumstance that has persisted and will continue to persist for many different reasons. The geographical proximity of neighboring countries draws the bulk of immigrant families within certain states. As in the past, already settled friends and family members beckon to newly arrived immigrant groups. Employment opportunities, educational opportunities, as well as the United States being a symbol of freedom from oppression and the land of golden opportunity, all contribute to the vast immigration numbers.

With the men and women, come the babies and children, all requiring food, clothing, housing, and education. For those not facing the problem of accommodating thousands of immigrants, it is understandably difficult to identify with the problems which certain areas of the United States encounter daily.

Educators within areas of heavy immigration must deal with specific needs of the children entering the school

systems. More often than not, the needs encompass more than the obvious language deficit. Physical, social, and psychological needs are becoming increasingly evident as more families arrive from countries experiencing political upheaval, war, extreme poverty, and oppression.

Limited English proficient (LEP) children who are entering American public schools for the first time, often lack any type of school experience. They are unfamiliar not only with the English language, but also with school traditions, rules, and expectations. They lack pre-school experience that would include exposure to, and perhaps acquisition of, basic learning tools necessary for immersion into American public school. Often the LEP child does not have a strong support system at home, as the parents are themselves illiterate, lacking skills in both their home language and in English.

The public school that served as the setting for the practicum study experienced an overwhelming influx of immigrant students within the past five years. Enrollment in special English classes quadrupled, requiring the special training and employment of new teachers. Because of the rapid growth and expansion of the ESL program, textbooks and teaching materials were scarce. The burden of creative, effective instruction was passed on to the teacher.

The newly formed self-contained ESL kindergarten classes were combined. Two teachers attempted to instruct thirty-

eight LEP children in a portable classroom that did not contain a bathroom or a sink.

For the most part, the children entered the school with no preschool experience. They were totally unfamiliar with traditional "school life". The parents did not speak English and were dependent on older siblings, friends, and neighbors to act as interpreters between school and home. The children faced the enormous problem of learning a new language compounded by their difficulties in adjusting to being in a classroom and a school environment.

Briefly stated, the targeted LEP kindergarten children were confronting problems other than the language deficit that were compounding learning difficulties.

Problem Documentation

An individual cumulative file is maintained for each student in keeping with the local school policy. The cumulative files contain immigration information as well as initial screening questionnaires for English proficiency. Figures gathered from the cumulative files of the LEP kindergarten classes showed that twenty-nine of the targeted kindergarten children learned Haitian-Creole as their first language. The remaining nine children learned Spanish as their first language. The ratio in the classroom was approximately 75% Haitian-Creole speakers to 25% Spanish speakers, allowing that one child was bilingual and spoke both

Spanish and Haitian-Creole fluently.

Twelve of the students were born in countries other than the United States and had entered the country within the last six months. Attendance records, withdrawal forms, and admission forms showed that thirty of the children had recently moved into the present school district, arriving from different districts, states and countries.

Classroom procedure requires the administering of placement tests at the beginning of the school year that serve as indications of student skills and levels of achievement. For LEP children, testing is administered either in English or in the home language. The targeted thirty-eight children all scored poorly even when the home language was used.

The required oral language proficiency interview, administered to each new student within the school district, revealed that all the targeted kindergarten children ranked at the lowest level (nonindependent) of English proficiency.

Registration records and interviews with parents indicated that most of the children lacked previous school experience. Seven had attended the school's summer session. Thirty-one had registered for the first time at the beginning of the school year.

At the end of the last school year, language proficiency tests were administered to the self-contained ESL kindergarten children. Of the twenty-seven children tested, eighteen had attained an intermediate level of proficiency in English. The

nine children who lagged behind were those who entered school with little or no preschool experience. Two of the children were retained, the other seven advanced to first-grade and were placed in a self-contained ESL classroom. By mid-year, in the current year, the same seven students were still lagging behind the other children as indicated by the teacher and the report card grades for the first two marking periods.

Causative Analysis

The limited English proficient kindergarten children were facing problems with their language deficit which other children were not having to confront. The outside problems coupled with the lack of English were acting to inhibit learning and prevent the children from attaining their maximum potential.

The fact that the children lacked previous school experience was a contributing factor. Lacking knowledge of cultural traditions, which native born English speakers take for granted, put the LEP students at an immediate disadvantage. Let cultural traditions here be defined as those that pertain to the school and classroom environment.

Because of the rapidity in which the self-contained classes had to be formed, little thought was given to the methods of instruction the teachers would use. Further, due to the extreme shortage of specially trained ESL teachers, the administrators had to place regular classroom teachers in the

self-contained classrooms (except the kindergarten classes). The hastily trained teachers were "on their own" to develop whatever curricula they deemed effective for second language instruction. Without adequate training and lack of understanding how second language acquisition occurs, the regular classroom teachers were at a disadvantage when they were called upon to instruct LEP children.

Since often the only model or English demonstrator the LEP children meet daily is the teacher, the importance of his/her delivery of instruction is crucial to the child's comprehension of the language. Through the teacher, the LEP child will also discover the school environment. A regular classroom teacher, unaccustomed to instructing LEP children, may lack the sensitivity to the cultural differences that the children are experiencing in their new surroundings. The teacher needs to bridge the gap between the child's cultural background and the experiences he/she confronts at school.

The lack of parental involvement at home contributed to the problem. For many LEP kindergarten children, an older brother or sister assumed the role of mother or father, often acting as the liaison between school and home. The parents were frequently illiterate and could not help their children. They were embarrassed and therefore rarely appeared at the school or became involved in school activities.

The school board policy regarding LEP students is transitional. The student is mainstreamed as quickly as

possible into a regular classroom situation, though by law, the child is entitled to three years of special English instruction. While children can converse as well as native-born children within an amazingly short period, what should be considered is whether they can function academically as well as the other children. It is assumed that because the child can communicate and express himself clearly in English he is equipped to learn in English.

Follow-up research on many former ESL students at the practicum school indicated that the children did poorly on criterion-based achievement tests. Low test scores form the basis for Compensatory Education classes at the school. It was discovered that two-thirds of the students forming the Compensatory Education classes had received ESL instruction and had been exited from the program.

The possibility clearly exists that to be successfully mainstreamed into regular classroom situations, limited English proficient children need skills not only in social communication but also in basic, academic classroom language. Since the state-adopted language proficiency assessment instruments are based solely on the correct usage of the second language, it is difficult to judge whether the student should be exited from the program. Teachers respond to policy and mainstream as quickly as possible without considering the amount of academic preparation to which their students have been exposed.

To summarize the problems that continue to face limited English proficient children: first, the language deficit of both the social language of communication and the academic language necessary for learning comprehension and achievement; second, the cultural differences and lack of experiential and environmental background; third, the lack of a strong support system at home (parental involvement); and, fourth, lack of teacher training and sensitivity to the specific needs of the LEP children.

Relationship of the Problem to Literature

Modern educators generally accept the theory that environment plays a crucial role in development; that genetic or biological factors are not the sole determining factors for the success or failure of a child to achieve his/her maximum potential.

Piaget acknowledged that a certain unevenness occurs in the cognitive development of children when they lack experience (family/environmental). Environmental influences, in other words, affect the cognitive development of children. This circumstance helps create an unevenness in learning among children of different experiential backgrounds. (Fischer & Lazerson, 1984).

The home environment is regarded as a crucial base for developing skills and positive learning attitudes in preschool children (Rich, 1988). Senator Bradley in his foreword

remarks to Rich's text (p. ix), states: "A 1966 report by sociologist James Coleman and his colleagues found that family environment was more strongly related to student achievement than any other factor including school quality."

Weiner (1988) discusses the social nature of language and asserts that "the more language experience a child has before learning to read, the easier for the child to understand the meaning of words when they appear on a printed page" (p. 31). Wiener maintains that "nursery school toddlers are part of a growing number of linguistically impoverished youngsters throughout the country" (p. 31). This circumstance is because parents today often leave children on their own to "confront experience and vocabulary which makes meaning from it" (p. 31). The linguistically impoverished youngsters to which Wiener refers also must include those limited English proficient pre-schoolers who, due to the working schedules of their parents, spend the better part of their days in places other than their own homes.

Kagan's article entitled "Early Care and Education: Tackling the Tough Issues" (February, 1989) discusses the growing concern for getting infants and children off to a good start. The article acknowledges the problems of many day-care environments in which so many pre-kindergarten children are placed. Kagan states that "this is a fertile and creative time when conventional policy strategies are being challenged." Further, "there is a growing sense that what has

gone before has been only marginally effective." Kagan states the following:

> If our expectations for the late 1980's are to be realized, fundamental shifts in the way we view the nature of children and families must be matched by equally dramatic shifts in the way we conceptualize and craft policies for them (p. 433).

Research which Saville-Troike (June, 1984) termed "a retrospective analysis" (p. 199), sought answers why some LEP children achieved better academic results than others who began the school year at the same level of English proficiency. The basic conclusion from the analysis was that LEP children need communication tactics and skills to meet social as well as academic needs. Being able to communicate on the playground with peers does not signify the English proficiency that will insure academic success. Mainstreaming LEP children who have not been taught academic "survival" language is likely to produce poor results. Saville-Troike (p. 216) further noted that "most of the children who achieved best in content areas, measured by tests in English, were those who had the opportunity to discuss the concept they were learning in their native language."

Published in Sweden first, and two years later in the United States, the Skutnabb-Kangas (1979) research involving minority Finnish children in Swedish schools, revealed some thought-provoking implications. When the immigrant children

were deprived of instruction in their native tongue, it was found that they eventually "lost competence in Finnish, without gaining full native-level competence in Swedish" (p. Foreword). Skutnabb-Kangas labelled the incompetence as "semilingualism" and believes the "same kind of phenomena might also operate for other ethnic and linguistic minorities" (p. 1).

The semilingualism to which Skutnabb-Kangas referred seems an appropriate term when considering the limited English proficient child coming to kindergarten lacking common preschool experiences that many of his peers posses. The child's learning is hampered not only by language but also by experience (environment). Educators, by not addressing the environmental/experiential differences, may end up with the semiliterate high school graduate who prompted the United States Supreme Court decision of Lau v. Nichols, 414 U.S. 563 (1974). The Court recognized that the public school system had failed to provide adequate education to a Chinese-American student. As discussed in Fischer, Schimmel, & Kelly, (1987), the Court held that "students who understand little or no English are denied equal opportunities when there are no systematic efforts to teach that language to non-English speaking students" (p. 306)

Consider the limited English proficient child entering kindergarten, often after having just arrived in this country. The child possesses no knowledge of English, lacks preschool

experience, and little or no parental support. Further complicate the situation by adding that the child is a "minority child," a member of a commonly regarded subculture (generally held in low esteem by the predominant culture). This situation is not uncommon, especially in the United States whose policy has always been to welcome the poor and the oppressed.

In his article, "Teaching English to Minority Groups" (1979), Arthur states:

> A problem that is sociological, psychological, genealogical, economic, and educational, as well as linguistic, cannot be solved by a dose of ESL. However, English teachers can contribute skills that reach some parts of the problem and, at the very best, they can avoid making the problem worse (p. 271).

In his recently published book entitled What's Whole In Whole Language? (1986), Goodman describes recent trends of thought regarding language and language acquisition as it pertains to classroom strategies. He states: "Children are literally driven to learn language by their need to communicate...People must communicate to be fully functional human beings" (p. 15). Further Goodman adds:

> Children born into bilingual or multilingual settings come to understand all the languages of their surroundings and to speak the ones they need

> to...Bilingual children learn more than one language for the same reason that monolingual children learn only one: 'they learn what they need' (p. 16-17).

To understand the learning propensity of kindergarten children in general, one should review Piaget's description of the preoperational child as found in Skolnick (1986). Piaget believed that all children will generally pass from the multisensory stage to the preoperational stage from the years of two through six, despite race or nationality. The five-to-seven shift involves a growth spurt in the brain as well as the body. The shift seems to enable the child to do more physically and cognitively.

A kindergarten child fits into the preoperational stage of cognitive development. He/she cannot abstract pure ideas; he/she learns only by referring to concrete objects. Second language acquisition occurs in much the same fashion. Krashen (1983) says: "We acquire when we focus on what is being said, rather than how it is said. We acquire when language is used for communicating real ideas" (p. 19).

Second language instruction, as it probably pertains to all learners, is heavily dependent upon concrete objects. Only if the learner has some frame of reference or some direct experience, can he/she own a new word, thought, or expression in the second language. Second language learners are much like Piaget's preoperational children who must direct their attention to only one aspect of a situation.

Research published by the Michigan Reading Association (1985) shows that true ownership or comprehension occurs when the child hears, speaks, reads, and writes a word. Language arts teachers must realize that the listening, speaking, reading, and writing processes are inextricably interwoven.

The limited English proficient student will learn through careful, explicit instruction using concrete objects. If the limited English child lacks experience from which to refer, or no comparative vocabulary in his home language, and is not fed an example in the new language, how can teachers expect that child to comprehend?

Johnson and Louis, in their recent publication entitled Literacy through Literature (1987), list the following basic assumptions:

> Language is used to communicate. Children increase their ability to use language by using it. Children increase their ability to use the language by becoming involved with language that is somewhat more mature than what they currently use. Children do not increase their ability to use language by being taught about language (pp. 1-3).

Johnson & Louis maintain that language in the classroom too often becomes the object of study where "teachers stop children from using language to get things done and instead turn their attention to the nature of language" (pp. 1-3). Language becomes meaningless, in other words, when attention

is directed exclusively at the mechanics of reading and writing.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following goals were projected for this practicum: the principal objective was to narrow the experiential learning gap that existed between the American-born English speakers and the LEP kindergarten children as determined by a teacher-prepared pretest and posttest. The goal involved the introduction of, and exposure to, environmental factors that would influence the lives of the children as they functioned in the school. The second general goal was to improve and enhance the students' comprehension of the language used in the classroom better to meet academic expectations for first-grade as determined by a teacher prepared pretest and posttest.

Behavioral Objectives

Over a twelve week period, the experiential "frame of reference" was to be improved and enhanced for a group of thirty-eight LEP kindergarten children. The children would acquire skills involved in academic language comprehension necessary for entry into first grade, determined by a teacher

prepared pretest and posttest.

The children were expected to demonstrate successfully comprehension of eighty percent of the following activities as determined by teacher prepared pretest and posttest, which the writer systematically introduced, modelled, and drilled:

1) Students would be able to ask correctly in English for things they needed to carry out classroom activities or function within the classroom.
2) Students would be able to respond to everyday questions that might occur at school or in the community.
3) Students would show understanding of school rules as they pertain to behavior in the classroom, in the library, in the cafeteria, in the halls, and on the playground.
4) Students would understand what they were expected to bring to school: supplies, money for lunch, signed field trip permission forms.
5) Students would assume responsibility for returning homework papers to school.
6) Students would be able to comprehend and respond to simple directions most often used for completing assignments and for taking tests as: draw a line to ....; circle the one that ....; color, cut, and paste; mark the one that ....; underline; bubble and space by, under, or near the correct answer.

7) Students would improve listening comprehension involving letter/sound recognition for at least ten letters of the alphabet.

Measurement of Objectives

The writer designed a pretest and posttest to assess environmental language comprehension among the thirty-eight kindergarten students (see Appendix A). It should be noted that, because of the very transient nature of the community, within the twelve-week implementation period, three children were withdrawn from school. Three new students enrolled within a two-week period. Two had arrived directly from Haiti, one from Cuba. These students were subsequently tested by the writer the first day of enrollment.

A second pretest/posttest was designed by the writer to assess academic classroom language acquisition (see Appendix B). The fifteen items were selected from kindergarten objectives as defined by the school district. Because many skills were involved, and allowing for the language differences, testing was administered during one school day, but in three different time periods. Each test period encompassed five assessment items. The classroom atmosphere was calm, friendly, and casual. To avoid unnecessary tension, the children were not told that they were being tested.

The test items were closely correlated to material presented during the implementation period. Vocabulary was

designed to include words that would require student recall, indicative of comprehension.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Advisories frequently aired on television during 1988 and 1989 inform the public that some children entering kindergarten possess four times the amount of vocabulary as other children. The poignant advisories go on to plead with parents to talk to their children. Other literacy campaigns urge students to stay in school, relating the message that there are no jobs available to high school drop-outs. Special volunteer reading programs are available to help illiterate adults in their endeavors to learn to read. Newspapers and magazines are filled with surveys and statistics pointing to the general ignorance of today's youth. There is no mistake that the push for literacy across the United States is ongoing and hopefully will have some impact. Educators find themselves looking to the home and the community for involvement and assistance. As Weiner (1988) states:

> ....adults must help children use language actively by talking about everything they possibly can...by encouraging conversation about the child's view of experience, the parent lays the foundation for

literacy (p. 32).

Cambourne (In Butler & Turbill, Eds., 1987) outlines seven conditions under which children learn to talk as follows:

1) Immersion - from the time they are born, meaningful, spoken language washes over and surrounds children;
2) Demonstration - children, in the process of learning, receive thousands and thousands of demonstrations (models and examples);
3) Expectation - children respond to our expectations for them;
4) Responsibility - children are left to take responsibility for what they learn about their language;
5) Approximation - children are not expected to display full-blown adult competence from the beginning;
6) Employment - we don't restrict our children while they are learning to talk;
7) Feedback - adults and siblings who teach very young children give them feedback of a very special kind...it is usually in the form of the conventional, adult expanded from and is non-threatening or

critical (pp. 6-9)

Cambourne suggests that as educators, we should remember our attitudes toward our own children when they were learning to talk; that we should incorporate these attitudes into our teaching strategies and concentrate on the nature of language acquisition rather than the mechanics of the language.

This opinion is echoed by Newman (1985). Newman asserts that often school language environments incorporate "talk which is centered on tasks involving context which are relatively abstract and about which children have no prior knowledge" (p. 13). Further, children soon discover that the language learning strategies to which they have become accustomed at home are "less effective and sometimes even counterproductive in the classroom" (p. 13).

Talk at home develops out of common, practical, everyday activities. Talk is an ongoing conversation with parents responding meaningfully to their children's language efforts. "Conversation at home," Newman says, "uses the familiar to extend the child's understanding of the world" (p. 13).

Newman states further:

> They (parents) sustain their children's involvement and participation in ongoing conversation. Intuitively aware that children learn to listen and talk by listening and talking, parents track children's meaning, interpreting and filling in as required by the situation (p. 13).

Rich (November, 1985) describes the whole language classroom as "comprehension-centered and child-centered, but methodologies will be as varied as the teachers and the children." Further, "whole language teachers know that using language helps children make sense of the world and of language. Classroom environments are arranged so that children have opportunities for interaction." Finally, "materials are used to fit the needs of the children rather than the children being put through the material to the LEP children achieve a minimal amount of proficiency, peer teaching in small groups on individual tasks, might prove an effective learning tool" (pp. 1-4).

Because it is generally accepted today that environment plays a crucial role in the overall development of children, one must look to the environment for solutions. Hudelson (1984) states that the "experiential and cultural background of the ESL reader has a strong effect on reading comprehension" (p. 221). Hudelson goes on to assert that even though limited English proficient children speak very little English, they are still reading "some of the print in their environment and are using that reading to increase their English" (p. 222). It is almost subliminal learning. Educators may use this environmental language in their everyday plans. It may prove to be a powerful technique as it brings the students' familiar environment to the school.

Chesterfield, Chesterfield, Hayes-Latimer, and Chavez

(1983) conducted research in an effort to measure the influence of peers and teachers on preschool LEP children. The finding was that there were "consistently high correlations between the use of English with peers and increased English language proficiency" (p. 403). The correlation seems to substantiate earlier studies conducted by Fillmore (1982) that emphasized the value of peer interaction in learning a second language. Further implications of the Chesterfield et al (1983) study indicate that "teachers are generally the only English language resource for LEP children early in the year. However, once the LEP children achieve a minimal amount of proficiency, peer teaching in small groups on individual tasks, might prove an effective learning tool" (p. 417).

Teachers concerned with LEP children must address the issue of teaching English in meaningful ways which will prepare their students for successful immersion and advancement in the school system. Meaningful ways implies using strategies that involve the children with language that is not abstract, language to which they can relate. Such teaching strategies take into consideration the experiential background of the students, use the environmental features common to the students, and enhance students' awareness of where they are today, where they have been, and where they are going.

It is only logical that comprehension is achieved when

listening, speaking, reading, and writing are consistently interwoven into the fabric of everyday lesson plans. Sensitivity and awareness of how children learn to talk is imperative for teachers to remember. Children learn to talk in a non-threatening environment, an environment that allows conversation to flow and encourages continuous interaction among teacher and students as well as students and their peers.

Recent investigative literature reflects certain pervasive trends in thought regarding the language acquisition of young children and its inextricable interaction with reading and writing. That young children are continuously acquiring language skills from birth on, is an acknowledged fact. Starting with babbling and cooing, language acquisition amazingly progresses to approximately three thousand words by the age of five (Glazer, in Strickland and Morrow, Eds., 1989, p. 18).

Early language experiences are accomplished in a natural home environment. Ideally, there is a type of run-on dialogue constantly transpiring between the baby and other members of the family, and primarily between the baby and its caretaker. Indications are that early language associated with early literature experiences produces positive inclinations toward early reading and writing. As Glazer (1989) points out, "Oral language which occurs in natural ways in and out of school, helps children use their knowledge about language in all of

their literacy activities, particularly reading and writing" (p. 20).

Baskwill (1988) states that "learners learn most easily the material they are interested in, stuff that's meaningful to them. They learn best in a safe, supportive environment in which risk-taking is encouraged" (p. 22).

In their article, Strickland and Taylor (1989) relate that storybook reading in the early home environment offers many highly applicable insights which teachers may want to consider when planning for their students. First, storybook reading in the home is generally a pleasurable experience. The environment is relaxed and there is an open dialogue between parent and child. The child is free to ask questions. Information is exchanged. Language is enhanced. Everyday experiences may be related to details in the stories. Family attitudes, values, and traditions are subtly interwoven into storybook reading experiences, as parents explain the actions and consequences of storybook characters. Strickland and Taylor (1989) summarize:

> We do believe that schools can benefit from studying how children learn in other settings, especially the home, and can apply that information to improve the learning environment (p. 34).

Cullinan (1989) enumerates specific items that echo what other researchers have written: "Children who learn to read early are ones who have been read to" (p. 35); "children's

language development is enriched by exposure to literature" (p. 36); children's later educational achievement is related to early experiences of listening to stories" (p. 36); and finally, "children build their storehouse of language from their communicative experiences and develop their concept of story from the stories they hear" (p. 36).

Cullinan (1989) suggests the following criteria in selecting books for young children:

> (1) rhythmic language, interesting vocabulary; (2) within the conceptual level of the child; (3) sturdily constructed; and (4) ones you like yourself (p. 37).

In discussion of the Core Experience Curriculum, Strickland (1989) states:

> The incidental learning that results from an environment that invited children to write, read, and talk is considered every bit as important and receives equal attention as the core experiences themselves (p. 137).

The difficulties facing classroom teachers of limited English proficient children are openly acknowledged by Bowman (1989) and Priestly-Romero (1988). Priestly-Romero states:

> The problem is not that teachers cannot deal with this diversity in their classroom but that they lack programs and materials designed to meet the needs of LEP students within the standard curriculum

(p. 2).

Bowman (October, 1989) asks: "How can teachers test for mastery of the curriculum if the children do not speak a standard language or use the same styles of communication?" (p. 119).

Both writers offer suggestions to teachers for implementing successful instruction to LEP children. Bowman (October, 1989) states: "...teachers need to learn to recognize developmentally equivalent patterns of behavior" (p. 119). Bowman goes on to state that before entering school, children learn basically the same things -- "a primary language, categorizing systems, interpersonal communication styles." (p. 119). It is suggested that the teacher of LEP children seek alternative ways for assessing student accomplishments based on different learning styles but equivalent learning behaviors.

Priestly-Romero (1988) suggests that LEP students "need significantly more language support than these (basal) programs provide" (p. 2). Priestly-Romero adds, "contextualization is utilizing visuals, demonstrations, dramatizations and other techniques that can make language more concrete" (p. 2). Also, "a strong vocabulary development program is the key to success in reading, not only for LEP students but for all students" (p. 2).

Description of Selected Solution

Teachers concerned with LEP children must address the issue of teaching English in meaningful ways that will prepare their students for successful immersion and advancement in the school system. Meaningful ways implies using strategies that involve children with language that is not abstract, language to which they can relate. Such teaching strategies consider the experiential background of the students, use the environmental features common to the students, and enhance students' awareness of where they are today, where they have been and where they are going.

It is only logical that comprehension is achieved when listening, speaking, reading, and writing are consistently interwoven into the backbone of everyday lesson plans. Sensitivity and awareness of how children learn to talk is imperative for teachers to remember. Children learn to talk in a non-threatening environment, an environment that allows conversation to flow and encourages continuous interaction among teacher and students as well as students and their peers.

To formulate and organize workable solutions for the thirty-eight target LEP children, one should consider the composition of the group as a whole: fourteen of the students were girls, twenty-four were boys; eight children learned Spanish as their first language, while thirty-one of the children learned Haitian-Creole as their first language. One

student was fluent both in Spanish and Haitian-Creole. The Spanish students were born in Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Argentina, Venezuela, Columbia, and Cuba. None of the parents spoke English with great proficiency and English was not spoken in the home among the adults. However, the older sisters and brothers of several of the children did speak English.

It was noted earlier that peer interaction definitely influences language acquisition. The writer used six-grade ESL students as peer teachers for helping and drilling the children, especially those who had recently arrived in the United States. The criteria for selecting the peer teachers were as follows: that they had reached an intermediate level of English proficiency; and that they spoke either Spanish or Haitian-Creole.

Four bilingual sixth-grade tutors or peer teachers (two English/Spanish speakers and two English/Haitian-Creole speakers) were selected based on their intermediate level of English proficiency, their willingness to participate, and also the cooperation between the various teachers involved (homeroom, pull-out ESL, and kindergarten). The tutors worked with three or four children two times per week (Tuesday through Friday). Integrated materials (materials incorporating and reinforcing basic skills covered by the class as a whole group during the week) were provided by the kindergarten teacher with instructions on what should be

practiced. It was hoped that the additional practice and the small group interaction would increase confidence, break down affective filters, as well as promote English comprehension and proficiency.

A second strategy involved the older sisters and brothers as well as other interested family members. The teacher initiated conferences with brothers and sisters. The homework procedure was explained, using an interpreter when necessary. Homework packets integrated and reinforced the basic skills being addressed in the classroom. Additionally, accompanying letters in English, Spanish, and Haitian-Creole were sent to parents to explain homework procedure. Family members were encouraged to help their kindergarten children with homework. It was hoped that bringing home and school together might promote a warm, caring, and friendly atmosphere that would ultimately encourage learning.

A third projected strategy involved the systematic introduction of basic language necessary for survival in the classroom, the school, and the community environments. The teacher introduced the vocabulary or language experience using whole language approach. Whole language can be defined as an integrated method of instruction by which students are allowed to experience language in a variety of ways (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

A teacher-developed twelve-week plan introduced various experience-related activities involving classroom skills

(necessary for first-grade), as well as school and community (environmental) awareness. It was hoped that at the outset of the twelve-week period the students would increase their experiential frame of reference as well as their vocabulary and overall English proficiency.

Initial steps taken for implementation included: selecting the peer teachers; arranging conferences with siblings or other family members; establishing a schedule for homework packets; organizing and coordinating lesson plans with hands-on experiential learning activities to cover a twelve-week period; and, coordinating state-adopted kindergarten objectives (initial letter/sound recognition) with the above-mentioned experiential activities to establish an integrated language approach of instruction.

Report of Action Taken

Practicum implementation was originally planned for sixteen LEP children. Because of increased enrollment, the original implementation plan had to be expanded to include thirty-eight children. Though the basic whole language procedures remained the same, the original week-by-week plans had to be changed.

During the first week of school, the writer and pull-out ESL teacher administered initial screening tests to all kindergarten children. Those who scored lowest in English proficiency were placed in the self-contained ESL kindergarten

classes (combined) with two teachers. The teacher-prepared pretests were administered within the first week of school by both kindergarten teachers (see Appendices A & B).

Because the writer helped in registering new students at the school, establishing initial contact with parents and older brothers or sisters of the LEP kindergarten children was facilitated. Bilingual teachers helped in explaining school practices and procedures to parents (bus transportation, lunch, after-school care).

Within the classroom "Welcome" letters written in English, Spanish, and Haitian-Creole were sent home with the children the first day of school. The letters outlined the general procedure that would be followed during the school year and enumerated what materials students would need to bring to class.

The writer and the pull-out ESL teacher (responsible for English instruction to sixth-grade LEP students) conferred about possible peer teachers for the kindergarten class. Because the pull-out schedule was not established until the third week of school, peer teachers did not begin to work with the children until that time. They were, however, chosen and agreed to work with those children who has most recently arrived in the United States. It was decided that the peer teachers would work with the children for fifteen minutes instead of thirty minutes because of the increased enrollment.

The writer developed the twelve-week plan in a

"spiralling" manner that allowed one skill to build upon another. Focussing on language development, all activities were interrelated and sequential. A conscious effort to review, model, drill and explain was exerted by both teachers. Therefore, though specific instruction was given directed at specific weekly goals, it was expanded, continuously modelled, and integrated into succeeding weekly activities. Further, the daily bilingual instruction paralleled objectives embraced in the weekly lesson plans of the classroom teachers that provided additional reinforcement and integration.

The first week was designated as an orientation period for the LEP children. However, daily routines and procedures continued to be part of implementation for the remaining eleven weeks. The kindergarten teachers agreed that only by establishing a strict regimen for following daily schedules would the children begin to understand school rules and expectations. Week One established the classroom rules, class schedule and homework policy. The bilingual teachers followed-up with explanations and examples in the home language.

The succeeding implementation weeks (until week twelve) fell into a general pattern that is outlined as follows:

1) Daily calendar activity;
2) Warm-up activity consisting of simple, fun drills in English; a song, a poem, a nursery rhyme, etc.;
3) Handwriting practice involving the alphabet "letter

of the week";

4) Language arts experience involving common vocabulary associated with the "letter of the week";
5) Storybook time providing reading experience and integrating vocabulary previously introduced. Additionally, all stories shared in the classroom were made available to the children in the designated "Library Corner";
6) Math and number concepts activities were integrated using selected materials that contained vocabulary being introduced in the other areas;
7) Experiential learning activities designed to enhance environmental awareness while integrating preciously taught vocabulary.

Incidental learning was regarded as highly motivational. Whenever the opportunity arose, activities involving incidental classroom experiences were incorporated into the weekly lesson plans.

The eleven weeks of implementation have been recapitulated and divided into different specific areas of focus: academic, environmental/experiential, and linguistic. Weekly academic focus basically involved the introduction of, and exposure to, vocabulary associated with specific letters of the alphabet. The environmental/experiential focus was integrated, when possible, with the academic focus to provide background, enrichment, and reinforcement. Listening

comprehension activities concentrated on specific academic skills. Shared reading experiences served to develop experiential background while integrating basic academic language skills. Materials used for implementation are listed in Appendix C.

Week One

Academic focus: visual and auditory discrimination of the letter /Aa/. All activities, shared reading, and homework assignments were designed to reinforce the letter /a/ (as in animal) sound.

Environmental/experiential focus: classroom rules were introduced, and homework procedure was established.

Linguistic focus: oral language drills to allow students to practice using their names (first and last).

Listening comprehension: follow teacher directions to "color" and also to "cut on the lines".

Shared reading: Mrs. Wishy Washy, It's Miami, and Noise.

Week Two

Academic focus: visual and auditory discrimination of the letter /Bb/. All activities, shared reading, and homework assignments were designed to reinforce the letter /b/ sound. Practice writing letters Aa and Bb.

Environmental/experiential focus: "Baby" related activities; identification of family members.

Linguistic focus: oral language drills using "May I" as, "May

I use the bathroom?"

Listening comprehension: follow teacher direction to "underline".

Shared reading: Are You My Mother?, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Hairy Bear, Old Grizzly, and I Can Fly.

Week Three

Academic focus: visual and auditory discrimination of the letter /Cc/. All activities, shared reading, and homework assignments were designed to reinforce the letter /c/ (as in cat) sound. Practice writing letters Aa - Cc.

Environmental/experiential focus: observation, discussion, and activities centered around the life cycle of a caterpillar. Identification of farm animals and the sounds they make.

Linguistic focus: drill and practice identifying colors.

Listening comprehension: follow teacher direction to "draw a line" to match capital and lower case letter /Cc/.

Shared reading: The Very Hungry Caterpillar, I Can Jump, The Farm Concert, Emily's Moo, and My Cat Peter.

Week Four

Academic focus: visual and auditory discrimination of the letter /Dd/. Identification and drill using directional prepositions. Practice writing letters Aa - Dd.

Environmental/experiential focus: daily mealtime activities; identification of dinner, lunch, and breakfast foods; setting

a table; (school) cafeteria manners.

Linguistic focus: auditory discrimination and comparison of letter /b/ and letter /d/ sound in initial position. Oral drills were practiced daily to review previously learned vocabulary words for letter /b/ and to contrast with vocabulary for letter /d/.

Listening comprehension: follow teacher direction to "draw a line to the picture that sounds like baby, doll, duck, ball..."

Shared reading: Nicky, Upstairs and Down, Where's Spot?, Sesame Street In & Out Up & Down, Have You Seen My Duckling?, Dinner, Wake Up Mom!, I Can Jump, and Dinosaurs.

Week Five

Academic focus: visual discrimination of the letter /Ee/. Since the vowel /e/ sound is probably the most difficult for Spanish speakers as well as Haitian-Creole speakers to master, it was not emphasized this early in the school year. Auditory discrimination would follow as the children became more familiar with English.

Environmental/experiential focus: participation in a PTA program that required learning words and appropriate actions for four songs. Movie "Dumbo" followed by discussion of elephants, circus animals, and circus life.

Linguistic focus: daily drill using /e/ vocabulary words. Drill and review colors. Drill and review vocabulary for letters Aa - Ee.

Listening comprehension: follow teacher directions to "circle the one that is the same/different".

Shared reading: The Little Green Caterpillar, Do You Want To Be My Friend, What Am I? and The Bear and the Fly.

Week Six

Academic focus: visual and auditory discrimination of the letter /Ff/. Activities, shared reading, and homework assignments developed to reinforce /f/ vocabulary words, Writing letters Aa - Ff.

Environmental/experiential: mini-unit on different types of fish and sea life provided background information for field trip to Seaquarium. Students watched "Pinocchio", identified the whale and compared its size to that of a goldfish. Weekly activities also centered around facts about the State of Florida.

Linguistic focus: oral drills and practice using adjectives (color or number) preceding nouns (fruits and other food) as, one red apple, two yellow bananas, green grapes, etc.

Listening comprehension: follow teacher directions to "put an 'X' on the one that is different/same" also to "color, cut, and paste" in the appropriate place.

Shared reading: Spot Goes to the Beach, Hattie and the Fox.

Week Seven

Academic focus: visual and auditory discrimination of the letter /Gg/. Activities, shared reading, and homework all

selected to reinforce /g/ sound. Identification and use of comparatives as bigger, biggest, and longer, longest. Practice writing letters Aa - Gg. Identifying the seven days of the week.

Environmental/experiential: Seaquarium field trip. Comparing and contrasting two fairy tales: Goldilocks and the Three Bears and The Three Billy Goats Gruff.

Linguistic focus: oral drills using comparative adjectives.

Listening comprehension: follow teacher direction to circle the one that is "longest, smallest, largest...".

Shared reading: The Three Billy Goats Gruff and Goldilocks and the Three Bears.

Week Eight

Academic focus: visual and auditory discrimination of the letter /Hh/. Practice writing letters Aa - Hh. Weekly activities, shared reading, and homework assignments were provided for enrichment and practice in identifying the letter /Hh/ and the sound it makes.

Environmental/experiential focus: concentration on the upcoming Halloween holiday. Identification of different types of hats associated with people and their occupations. Identification and discussion of different types of houses in which people and animals live. Discussion and observation of a honeybee, honeycomb, and hive followed by tasting honey and comparing sweet to salty to bitter.

Linguistic focus: drill using prepositions in phrases as, in

the box, on the board, down the stairs...

Listening comprehension: responding to questions most frequently asked: What is your name? How old are you? Who is your teacher? and, What is the name of your school?

Shared reading: Trick or Treat Halloween, Hello, Hattie and the Fox, Rosie's Walk, Spot's First Walk, The Pumpkin, Bears in the Night, and I am Frightened.

Week Nine

Academic focus: visual and auditory discrimination of the letter /Ii/. Visual discrimination was emphasized because of the degree of difficulty in mastering the auditory vowel sound for Spanish and Haitian-Creole speakers. Auditory discrimination would develop in the succeeding months of English practice. The short vowel sound /i/, as in Indian and igloo, was introduced.

Environmental/experiential: discussion and activities about Indians: how they lived, where they lived, what they ate, what they wore, and how they helped the Pilgrims. Observation and discussions on different types of insects, including the spider. Opportunity provided to watch "Charlotte's Web" movie. Identification and discussion with demonstration of different types of musical instruments.

Linguistic focus: oral drills using actions reviewing opposites: the opposite of up is..., the opposite of in is..., the opposite of inside is... etc.

Listening comprehension: follow teacher direction to color,

cut, paste, and fold on the dotted line. Learn the "Ten Little Indians" song.

Shared reading: On A Chair, Rum Tum Tum, Look Closer, My Presents.

Week Ten

Academic focus: visual and auditory discrimination of the letter /Jj/. Identification of sets that contain zero to five items. Practice writing letters Aa - Jj.

Environmental/experiential focus: demonstration of a game of jacks. Comparison of jacks, jack-in-the-box, and jack-o-lantern. Discussion and observation of a pumpkin and it's parts. Jelly sandwiches and jelly beans provided for tasting experience. Opportunity provided to watch "Mickey and the Beanstalk" movie. Comparisons drawn between the movie and the story Jack and the Beanstalk.

Linguistic focus: comparison and observations drawn around sound of letter /j/ that is silent in Spanish..."Juan to John" and "Jorge to George", etc. Oral drill and practice repeating individual telephone numbers.

Listening comprehension: auditory discrimination drills emphasizing the sound of letter /j/.

Shared reading: Jack and the Beanstalk, The Gingerbread Man, The Cooking Pot, and So Sick!.

Week Eleven

Academic focus: visual and auditory discrimination of the

letter /Kk/. Practice writing letters Aa - Kk. Practice writing names on lined paper. Identification of sets containing zero to five items.

Environmental/experiential focus: all activities, shared reading, and homework assignments centered around the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday. Thanksgiving meal planned for the classroom. Decorations were made, including placemats for tables. Tour of school kitchen and identification of different items found in a kitchen was provided. Identification of different animals whose names begin with the letter /k/.

Linguistic focus: oral drill counting to ten. Concentration and practice using /th/ sound as in Thanksgiving, thank-you, and Thursday. Contrast /th/ sound to /t/ sound.

Shared reading: Dear Zoo and Numbers of Things.

Week Twelve - Posttesting and evaluating results.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

Projected objectives for the practicum included improving and enhancing basic language skills for thirty-eight limited English proficient kindergarten children in two areas: 1) Experiential/environmental English to narrow the learning gap which existed between native-born English speaking children and the LEP children; and, 2) classroom academic English to facilitate successful entry into first grade.

The writer designed pretests and posttests to evaluate student performance before and after the twelve-week implementation period. Fifteen items were used to assess environmental language comprehension (see Appendix A). Likewise, fifteen items were used to assess classroom language comprehension (see Appendix B). All assessment items were closely correlated to meet state kindergarten objectives. All assessment items were closely integrated with experiences presented within the classroom. Because the students possessed little or no knowledge of English, vocabulary was strictly controlled. It was projected that the children would successfully demonstrate comprehension of eighty percent of

the material presented during the implementation period.

Students were pretested within the first week of the school year. Any new children were pretested the first day of admission.

The writer identified the following seven specific objectives:

1) Students would be able to ask correctly in English for things they needed to carry out classroom activities or to function in the classroom.
2) Students would be able to respond to everyday questions that might occur in the school or in the community.
3) Students would demonstrate understanding of school rules as they pertain to behavior in the classroom, in the library, in the cafeteria, in the halls, and on the playground.
4) Students would understand what they were expected to bring to school: supplies, money for lunch, and signed field trip permission forms.
5) Students would assume responsibility for returning homework papers to school.
6) Students would be able to comprehend and respond to simple directions most often used for completing assignments and taking tests.
7) Students would improve listening comprehension involving letter/sound recognition for at least ten

letters of the alphabet.

The first five specific objectives were aimed at improving the environmental/experiential language comprehension for the thirty-eight LEP kindergarten children. A teacher-prepared pretest/posttest was used to evaluate progress for the first four specific objectives (see Appendix A). The results were as follows:

Objective One: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO ASK CORRECTLY IN ENGLISH FOR THINGS THEY NEEDED TO CARRY OUT CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES OR FUNCTION WITHIN THE CLASSROOM.

Questions eleven through fifteen (see Appendix A) were designed to evaluate student comprehension of common English vocabulary used to function within the classroom (see Table 1).

Question eleven required the students to be able to ask for a piece a paper. None of the students were able to ask correctly for a piece of paper when pretested. Thirty-eight students could correctly ask for paper when posttested. Question twelve required the students to ask to use the bathroom. When pretested, two students were able to do so. Posttest results revealed that thirty-eight students could correctly ask to use the bathroom. Question thirteen required the students to ask for a drink. None of the students were able to ask for water when pretested, while thirty-six could ask for water when posttested. Question fourteen required the students to ask for a pencil. While only one student was able

Table 1

Acceptable Responses to Questions Assessing Environmental Language Comprehension

	Pretest	Posttest
Question 1	3	36
Question 2	2	34
Question 3	0	38
Question 4	0	35
Question 5	2	33
Question 6	0	12
Question 7	0	29
Question 8	2	30
Question 9	1	36
Question 10	0	36
Question 11	0	38
Question 12	2	38
Question 13	0	36
Question 14	1	36
Question 15	0	33

Note. Thirty-eight was the possible total amount of acceptable responses per question.

to so ask when pretested, thirty-six could ask for a pencil when posttested. None of the students could respond to pretest question fifteen which required them to ask to use the telephone and tell where in the school the telephone was located. When posttested, thirty-three students could ask to use the telephone and could tell where in the school the telephone was located.

Objective Two: STUDENTS WOULD BE ABLE TO RESPOND TO EVERYDAY QUESTIONS THAT MIGHT OCCUR AT SCHOOL OR IN THE COMMUNITY.

Pretest questions one through six were designed to evaluate student comprehension of everyday questions (see Table 1 for a list of acceptable pretest and posttest responses).

Question one required the students to relate their full names. Pretest results indicated that only three of the students could correctly relate their full names. Posttest results indicated that by the end of implementation, thirty-six students could properly identify themselves. Similarly, for question two, only two students knew their age during pretesting. Posttest results showed that thirty-four students were able to tell their age. Whereas, none of the students could respond to the pretest question three that required them to orally state their teacher's name, all could correctly respond to the same posttest question. None of the students could respond to the pretest question four that required them to name their school. Posttest results showed that thirty-

five students could correctly respond to the question. Two of the students were able to answer the pretest question five that required them to tell the names of their brothers and/or sisters. Posttest results indicated that thirty-three children could relate the names of other family members.

Question six required students to be able to repeat their home telephone number. None of the students could respond when pretested, and only twelve students could positively respond when posttested. However, it must be noted that six of the thirty-eight students did not have telephones in their homes.

Objective Three: STUDENTS WOULD SHOW UNDERSTANDING OF SCHOOL RULES AS THEY PERTAIN TO BEHAVIOR IN THE CLASSROOM, IN THE LIBRARY, IN THE CAFETERIA, IN THE HALLS, AND ON THE PLAYGROUND.

Questions seven through ten were designed to evaluate student comprehension of school regulations and expectations (see Table 1 for a list of acceptable pretest and posttest responses). Pretest results for question seven requiring the students to know what time they had to be in school indicated that none of the children were able to so indicate. Posttest revealed that twenty-nine could tell what time they had to be in school and what to do if they were tardy. As required by question eight, only two children could tell how much money they needed for lunch when pretested, while thirty children were able to tell how much money they needed for lunch when

posttested. As required by question nine, only one student was able, when pretested, to tell what items were required for school (i.e., paper, pencil, crayons, bookbag, etc.). Thirty-six students could name what the teacher required of them to bring to school when posttested. Pretest question ten revealed that none of the children could demonstrate comprehension of field trip procedure. However, when posttested thirty-six children could tell about field trip procedure and school requirements.

Objective Four: STUDENTS WOULD UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY WOULD BE EXPECTED TO BRING TO SCHOOL: SUPPLIES, MONEY FOR LUNCH, AND SIGNED FIELD TRIP PERMISSION FORMS.

During the first week of school, teachers sent home letters (written in English, Spanish, and Haitian-Creole) that listed items children would need for school. Teachers maintained a class list and noted how many parents responded to the letter. Only eight children were provided with school supplies from home. Since so many of the children could not afford to buy crayons, scissors, bookbags, pencils, etc., the teachers determined not to hold them responsible. The necessary supplies were provided for each child and kept in the classroom in individually marked containers. The teachers held the children responsible for their own supplies within the classroom.

The first week of school, and, thereafter with each new student registration, free lunch/breakfast applications were

provided to the parents. Because of the language barriers and because so many of the parents were illiterate, six weeks elapsed until all applications had been returned and processed. Of the thirty-eight children only four would pay for their lunches.

During the implementation period the kindergarten class went on one field trip. In order for the children to be able to go, signed parental permission forms were required. Also, a fee was charged in order to cover admission and transportation costs. Students were held responsible for returning the signed forms and the required money. The teachers explained the procedure in English. The bilingual teachers followed up in Spanish and Haitian-Creole. Students were given one week to return the forms and money. Only eighteen students responded. Teachers extended the time to include the day before the trip. Thirty-two students were able to go on the field trip.

Objective Five: STUDENTS WOULD ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR RETURNING HOMEWORK PAPERS TO SCHOOL.

The writer maintained a weekly log that tracked student homework assignments. Homework procedure required that the assignment be completed at home, that the student's name appear at the top of the paper, that a parent or older family member sign the paper, and that the paper be submitted the following school day. After the implementation period, weekly homework figures were compiled and charted to show progress

(see Figure 1).

In order to evaluate student acquisition of basic academic language skills encompassed in objectives six and seven, a teacher-prepared pretest/posttest (see Appendix B) was administered. The results (see Table 2) are as follows:

Objective Six: STUDENTS WOULD BE ABLE TO COMPREHEND AND RESPOND TO SIMPLE DIRECTIONS MOST OFTEN USED FOR COMPLETING ASSIGNMENTS AND FOR TAKING TESTS.

Ten items of the fifteen-item test required students to listen to and follow teacher directions. When pretested, only four students could write their own names as directed (at the top of the paper). Thirty-four students correctly wrote their names as directed when posttested. Whereas, when pretested, only three students correctly responded to the direction that required them to circle an object, posttest results indicated that thirty-six students were able to respond correctly.

None of the students understood the directions to "underline", "put an 'X' on", or to "color the bubble under the correct answer" when pretested. Posttest results indicated that thirty-four students underlined the picture as directed by the teacher. Thirty-two students marked an "X" on a picture that was different from the others. Thirty-one students correctly colored the bubble under the picture indicated by the teacher.

Items eight, nine, and ten on the pretest required students to "color", "cut", and "paste", respectively, and

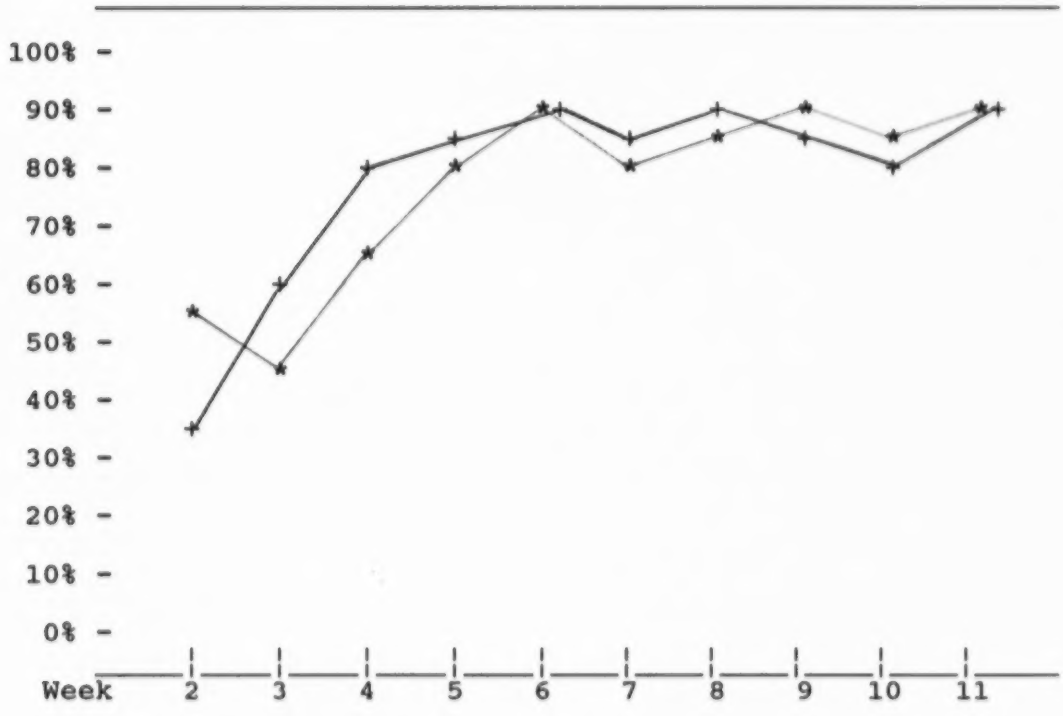

Figure 1. Percentage of student successful biweekly homework completion

* = Tuesday homework
+ = Thursday homework

Table 2

Correct Responses to Items Assessing Classroom Language Comprehension

	Pretest	Posttest
Item 1	4[a]	34
Item 2	3	36
Item 3	0	34
Item 4	0	32
Item 5	0	31
Item 6	2	26
Item 7	2	28
Item 8	3	34
Item 9	0	38
Item 10	0	38
Item 11	0	29
Item 12	0	26
Item 13	0	32
Item 14	2	36
Item 15	0	35

Note. Thirty-eight was the possible total amount of responses per item.

[a] Though ten students could write their names, the item assessed listening comprehension of teacher direction. (Write your name at the top of the paper.)

according to teacher directions. Only three students understood what to color. Two students understood how to cut on the dotted line. None of the students understood where to paste the picture. When posttested, thirty-four students colored a picture as directed. All of the students were able to cut correctly on the dotted lines. Likewise, all of the students understood where to paste the picture according to teacher direction.

Objective Seven: STUDENTS WOULD IMPROVE LISTENING COMPREHENSION INVOLVING LETTER/SOUND RECOGNITION FOR AT LEAST TEN LETTERS OF THE ALPHABET.

The teacher randomly selected previously taught letters of the alphabet to be included in the pretest/posttest. Items six and seven on the pretest (see Appendix B) required visual discrimination of capital and lower case letters. When pretested, two students could correctly match the letters indicated for both items. Posttest results showed that for items six and seven, twenty-six students and twenty-eight students, respectively, were able to match correctly the alphabet letters.

Items eleven and twelve required listening comprehension and auditory discrimination of initial consonant letter sounds b, j, h, and k. None of the students, for both items eleven and twelve, could discriminate the letter sounds when pretested. Posttest results indicated that twenty-nine students were able to discriminate between b and j.

Similarly, twenty-six students could discriminate between h and k.

Item thirteen required students to visually discriminate letters that were the same. When pretested, none of the students were able to understand the directions. Thirty-two students successfully circled the letters that were the same when posttested.

Item fourteen required identification of a triangle shape. Two students discriminated a triangle when pretested. Thirty-six were able to discriminate the triangle shape when posttested.

Item fifteen was designed to determine student comprehension of same and different. Pretest scores indicated that none of the students understood the teacher directions (put an "X" on the one that does not belong). Posttest results showed that thirty-five students correctly responded to the item.

The writer projected that the LEP kindergarten students would successfully demonstrate comprehension of eighty percent of material covering environmental/experiential language as well as academic classroom language.

A pretest and posttest percentage comparison indicated that overall growth in the targeted area of environmental language comprehension was 85.79%. Growth was estimated by determining the percentage differences between pretest and posttest scores. Posttest percentage scores indicated mastery

of 80% and higher for twelve of the fifteen assessment items (see Table 3).

A percentage comparison of correct pretest/posttest responses indicated overall growth was 82.99% in the area of classroom language comprehension. Growth was determined by calculating the differences in pretest and posttest percentage scores. Posttest percentage scores indicated mastery of 80% and higher for eleven of the fifteen assessment items (see Table 4).

Conclusions

The projected goal of the practicum was to increase language comprehension, environmental and academic, for thirty-eight LEP kindergarten children. Results of the environmental language assessment suggested that mastery of eighty percent and higher had occurred for twelve of the fifteen measured items (see Table 3). Results of the classroom academic language assessment were similar, indicating mastery of eighty percent and higher for eleven of the fifteen assessment items (see Table 4).

The results of these findings served to convince the writer to continue using the same method of whole language instruction as outlined by Goodman (1986) combined with the natural approach principles embraced by Krashen (1983). It was evident that the children, twelve of whom had been in the

Table 3

Percentage Comparison of Acceptable Responses to Questions Assessing Environmental Language Comprehension

Question Number	Pretest Percent	Posttest Percent	Percent Increase
1	7.89	94.47	86.58
2	5.26	89.47	84.21
3	0	100.00	100.00
4	0	92.10	92.10
5	5.26	86.84	81.58
6	0	31.57[a]	37.50[b]
7	0	76.31	76.31
8	5.26	78.94	73.68
9	2.63	94.73	92.10
10	0	94.73	94.73
11	0	100.00	100.00
12	5.26	100.00	94.74
13	0	94.47	94.47
14	2.63	94.73	92.10
15	0	86.84	86.84

Note. Overall growth based on an average of 1286.94 for fifteen items was calculated at 85.79%

[a] n = 32. [b] n = 32. Six subjects did not have telephones.

Table 4

Percentage Comparison of Correct Responses to Items Assessing Classroom Language Comprehension

Item Number	Pretest Percent	Posttest Percent	Percent Increase
1	10.52	89.47	78.95
2	7.89	94.73	86.84
3	0	89.47	89.47
4	0	84.21	84.21
5	0	81.57	81.57
6	5.26	68.42	63.16
7	5.26	73.68	68.42
8	7.89	89.47	81.58
9	0	100.00	100.00
10	0	100.00	100.00
11	0	76.31	76.31
12	0	68.42	68.42
13	0	84.21	84.21
14	5.26	94.73	89.47
15	0	92.10	92.10

Note. Overall growth based on an average of 1244.71 for fifteen items was calculated at 82.98%.

United States for less than six months, had rapidly acquired the basic survival language necessary for functioning with in a classroom. They were effectively able to communicate their needs, answer questions, and participate in class discussions. Further, the children were beginning to write in English and were able to retell familiar stories in English.

The language acquisition and subsequent comprehension that occurred substantiates many of the thoughts previously espoused within this text: that acquisition occurs in a friendly, non-threatening environment; that it is a natural function; that it is integrated with listening, speaking, reading, and writing; and, that it requires concrete objects from which to draw a reference.

One may question if all this acquisition could also have occurred in a regular classroom situation. The writer is of the opinion that teachers will generally respond to the needs of the majority rather than the minority, especially in overcrowded classroom situations. For many decades, the majority has been defined as American born and English speaking. Notwithstanding a few geographical exceptions, classroom teachers have not had to instruct nor have they been trained to instruct limited English proficient students to any great extent. Further, teacher sensitivity to cultural differences has been traditionally ignored. However, as Bowman (October, 1989) speculates: "Over the next decade or two, language-minority children will become the 'majority' in

our public schools" (p. 118). The burgeoning immigration population is reminiscent of that at the turn of the century and is occurring everywhere across the country.

Recommendations

Looking ahead to a new decade, the last decade of the twentieth century, educators must recognize that the world is becoming smaller and smaller in terms of communication. Economically speaking, it seems obvious that nations need to recognize and nurture those multilingual, multiethnic traditions that exist within their own society in order to promote understanding and better relations among all societies. This can only be accomplished by acceptance and tolerance of others who share different cultural backgrounds and languages. What better place is there than the classroom for promoting good will, tolerance, and acceptance? What better place is there than the classroom for helping students discover the world of communication as recognized in terms of listening, speaking, reading, and writing? The challenge for educators today is to develop within their students a geographical sense of awareness of who they are, where they have been, and where they are going.

Dissemination

The writer has been actively engaged in assisting the other ESL teachers to develop their own whole language

curricula. Many of the regular classroom teachers have expressed their interest in whole language strategies. They have visited the self-contained ESL kindergarten to observe. Many have asked the writer for help in choosing new materials that would be appropriate for their limited English proficient students.

The state textbook selection committee recently recognized and recommended the adoption of integrated reading/language arts programs state wide. School districts decide for themselves which textbooks they will adopt, choosing from the state recommendations. The writer is actively participating in promoting and disseminating information about the favorable results achieved using an integrated language approach.

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Appendix A

Pretest and Posttest Questions Assessing Environmental Language Comprehension

1. What is your name? (first and last)
2. How old are you?
3. Who is your teacher?
4. What is the name of your school?
5. What is your brother's/sister's name?
6. What is your telephone number?
7. What time do you need to be in school?
8. Can you show how much money you need for lunch?
9. What do you need to bring to school every day?
10. If there is a field trip, who needs to write their name of the permission form? What will you do with the form?
11. If you need a piece of paper, what will you say?
12. If you need to use the bathroom, what will you say?
13. If you are thirsty, what will you say?
14. If you need a pencil, what will you say?
15. If you are sick and need to call home, what will you say? Where is the telephone?

Appendix B

Pretest and Posttest to Assess Academic Classroom Language Comprehension

(The following items corresponded to pictures on student test papers; students marked their papers according to teacher directions.)

1. Write your name at the top of the paper.
2. Draw a circle around the dog.
3. Underline the person who is a fireman.
4. Put an "X" on the animal that is different.
5. Color the bubble under the picture of a turkey.
6. Draw a line from capital B to lower case b.
7. Draw a line from lower case j to capital J.
8. Color the picture of the kitten.
9. Cut out the picture on the dotted lines.
10. Paste the picture where it belongs.
11. Color the bubble under the picture that sounds like "baby" (jack-o-lantern or balloon).
12. Underline the picture which name sounds different (kangaroo, kitten, or helicopter).
13. Circle the letter that is the same as the one at the beginning of the row.
14. Color the shape that is a triangle.
15. Put an "X" on the picture that does not belong (different hats and a caterpillar).

Appendix C

Resource List

Shared reading books:

Berenstain, S., Berenstain, J. (1971). Bears in the night. New York: Random House

Campbell, R. (1982). Dear zoo. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books.

Campbell, R. (1987). It's mine. London: Campbell Blackie Books.

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Oxenbury, H. (1967). Numbers of things. London: Collins Publishing.

Peters, S. (1980). Trick or treat Halloween. Mahwah, NJ: Troll Associates.

Tafuri, N. (1986). Have you seen my duckling?. New York: Viking Penguin.

Winter, P. (1976). The bear and the fly. New York: Crown Publishers.

Ziebel, P. (1989). Look closer!. New York: Clarion.

Ziefert, H. (1987). Nicky upstairs and down. New York, Viking Penguin.

Ziefert, H., Nicklaus, C. (1985). So sick!. New York: Random House.

Fairy Tales:

Goldilocks and the three bears. (1989). (Big Book Edition). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

The gingerbread man. (1989). (Big Book Edition). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

The three billy goats Gruff. (1989). New York: Scholastic TAB Publications.

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